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CC: Kim Jennings/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
Subject: FYI - Second Set of Pennsylvania Test Results Shows Drinking Water Is Safe, EPA Says

From BNA:

Drinking Water Second Set of Pennsylvania Test Results Shows Drinking Water Is Safe, EPA Says

PHILADELPHIA—Results of tests for contaminants in drinking water from 20 private wells near Dimock, Pa., based on samples taken between Jan. 30 through Feb. 3 show the water is safe to drink, the Environmental Protection Agency said April 6.

EPA collected water samples between Jan. 23 and Feb. 15 from a total of 61 wells in the northeastern Pennsylvania township, where methane in groundwater was linked to nearby natural gas drilling by Cabot Oil and Gas Corp. in 2009.

In a March 15 announcement of test results for samples taken from 11 wells during the first week of sampling, EPA said none of the dozens of pollutants that were measured were present in levels that present a health concern ([52 DEN A-9, 3/19/12](#)).

Results were similar for the 20 wells sampled during the second week of testing.

“This set of sampling did not show levels of contaminants that would give EPA reason to take immediate action,” EPA spokesman Roy Seneca said in a statement.

Some Pollutant Levels Trigger Risk Assessment

Water samples from five of the 20 homes showed the presence of sodium, methane, or lithium at levels that triggered additional review by an EPA toxicologist to determine if the amount presents a health concern.

Federal and state regulators have not established maximum contaminant levels for those compounds in drinking water.

The sample of kitchen tap water from one home had arsenic at slightly below the maximum contaminant level and will be retested, Seneca told BNA.

Another well had relatively high levels of lead and fecal coliform bacteria, but Cabot is already supplying the home served by that well with an alternate supply of drinking water, he said.

Until EPA has results from a second round of sampling and testing, the federal agency will continue providing temporary alternate water supplies to the three homes in the first week of sampling whose water test results suggested arsenic or chromium levels might pose a health concern, Seneca said.

EPA Intervention Follows State Action

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in 2009 held that faulty casing and cement in natural gas wells Cabot drilled near Dimock had allowed methane to migrate to groundwater and into private drinking water wells.

Under terms of a settlement with DEP, Cabot provided an alternate water supply to 19 homes until Nov. 30, 2011, when DEP determined that the company had satisfied the conditions of the settlement and allowed Cabot to end the water deliveries.

Dimock residents who maintain their water is unfit to drink succeeded in getting EPA involved, after the federal agency reviewed data the homeowners provided that suggested gaps in water sampling and sample results.

In a statement issued after EPA released the latest sampling results, Cabot said the EPA data are consistent with water quality data accumulated by state and local authorities and by Cabot, which has consistently denied responsibility for the methane in Dimock water wells.

“Importantly, the EPA again did not indicate that those contaminants that were detected bore any relationship to oil and gas development in the Dimock area, particularly given the fact that any contaminants are more likely indicative of naturally occurring background levels or other unrelated activities,” Cabot said.

By Lorraine McCarthy

For More Information

Water test results for the first 31 of the 60 Dimock-area wells where EPA collected samples in January and February are available at <http://www.epaosc.org/sites/7555/files/Dimock%20Week%201%20and%202.pdf>.